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AUTHOR Beller, Caroline; Griffith, Priscilla; Williams, Samella; Orr, Betsy; Hunt, Sharon

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Teach for Arkansas program, a partnership which addresses the problem of recruiting student teachers who reflect the state's diverse cultures and who will be successful teaching diverse students. Partners include: the University of Arkansas; Phillips Community College and the Delta public schools; the SBC Foundation; and the Walton Family Foundation. The program recruits students to a teacher education program administered by the University of Arkansas which is delivered via technology at Phillips Community College. A full-time University of Arkansas faculty member was hired from the Delta to work with the program, teach courses, and supervise student teaching. This faculty member's salary is paid by the Walton Family Foundation, as are minority students' tuitions. As part of their internship during the program's fifth year, students teach in Delta schools, which provides faculty development for inservice teachers. The SBC Foundation has provided a grant for fifth year students to attend the Arkansas Reading Association conference in Little Rock so that distance education students have a chance to leave their campus and meet traditional students from the University of Arkansas campus. (SM)

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Caroline Beller, Priscilla Griffith, Samella Williams, Betsy Orr, Sharon Hunt

University of Arkansas
Northwest Arkansas Partnership

Contact Information:
Priscilla Griffith
College of Education and Health Professions
GRAD 201
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701
Telephone/ 501-575-3326
Fax/ 501-575-6676
E-mail/ griffith@comp.uark.edu

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Who Will Teach for Arkansas?

Predictions in One-Third of a Nation: A Report of the Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life are that in the 21st century the students of color in U.S. schools will reach or exceed 33% of the total. In sharp contrast to the demographics of the U.S. school population are the demographic characteristics of the U.S. teaching population, which tends to be white and middle class. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, America will need to hire as many as two million teachers over the next decade. Within the state of Arkansas, and particularly in the Arkansas Delta the teacher shortage has already reached a crisis stage. Likewise, today the demographics of Arkansas Delta public school classrooms exceed the 33% minority student enrollment projection. In this paper we will describe the *Teach for Arkansas* program, a partnership attempt to address the problem of recruiting students who reflect our diverse cultures and who will be successful teaching diverse students.

The Teach for Arkansas Project

Teach for Arkansas demonstrates how a partnership between a land-grant university, a community college, public schools, and foundations, with the aid of technology, can prepare teachers for the Delta region of Arkansas. The partners are the University of Arkansas, located in the northwest corner of the state, Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas and the Delta public schools, the SBC Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation. A shared vision of increasing the number of high quality minority teachers for children in the Delta has guided all of the efforts of *Teach for Arkansas*.

History of the Teach for Arkansas Program

Teach for Arkansas was originally designed as a program to support minority students from the Delta to come to the University of Arkansas to complete their baccalaureate and masters degrees before returning to the Delta to teach. This model did not work as too few students were recruited to leave their home communities for three to five years to come to northwest Arkansas.

It became apparent that the structure of the program would have to be changed for it to be successful. With the support of all partners, the program was completely redesigned to provide the necessary degrees and educational experiences in the Delta. A steering committee, representing University of Arkansas, Phillips Community College, Delta schools, and the Foundations, was formed to guide the development and implementation of a redesigned program. The steering committee unanimously agreed that offering the degree programs in the Delta would attract the students and provide a cadre of instructional leaders for Delta schools.

According to Martin Haberman, nearly 50% of all African Americans pursuing postsecondary study are enrolled in community colleges. Such colleges provide a supportive environment, and minority students perceive that they are given more opportunity to be successful in two-year colleges. Phillips Community College became a prime source for recruiting candidates into *Teach for Arkansas*. *Teach for Arkansas* is now a "grow our own" teachers project based in the Arkansas Delta. Instead of bringing students to the University of Arkansas campus for their study, the University of Arkansas has used technology to deliver its teacher education program to the Delta.

In order for the University of Arkansas to offer the two degrees in the Delta, administrators and faculty from both institutions, and the Delta schools worked closely together

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to articulate the curriculum and plan the logistics. The foundations worked with the team to redefine how their financial support would be used. Early in the development of the *Teach for Arkansas* program, the University of Arkansas faculty director of the program spent considerable time in the Delta working with students, the school districts, and members of the community building support for the program. This was critical because others had promised programs to the region but were unable to deliver them. This year, the University of Arkansas has hired a full-time faculty member from the Delta to work with the program, teach courses, and supervise students in their field experiences. This faculty member's salary is paid through a grant from the Walton Family Foundation and the tuition generated from the *Teach for Arkansas* program.

Evidence of Success

The President of the University of Arkansas System, the Chancellor of Phillips Community College, and the Provost of the University of Arkansas Fayetteville campus have all voiced their strong support for the program. This high profile program can claim

- Tremendous support from area school boards and school administrators.
- High participation rates by minority students.
- A decline in teacher shortages in the Delta as a direct result of the program.

Cohort 1. The first cohort of students has completed the BSE degree, and 12 of those students are enrolled in the MAT program. Minority students' tuition is paid through scholarships from the Walton Family Foundation. As part of their internship during this fifth year, they are teaching in Delta schools. This yearlong internship also provides substantial faculty development opportunities for current public school teachers.

Cohort 2. A second cohort of 25 students began study toward the BSE degree in Elementary Education in fall 1999. In August 2000, 19 students attended individual advising

meetings. We estimate that 14 students are on target for graduation in May 2001 and will have a GPA sufficient for admission into the MAT program, which is scheduled to begin summer 2001.

Cohort 3. The University of Arkansas and Phillips Community College have signed a memorandum of understanding to organize a third cohort of students who began taking coursework towards the BSE in Elementary Education in Spring 2001. Compressed video courses will be transmitted to Helena, Stuttgart, and DeWitt campuses of PCC. On-site courses will be taught at the Helena campus.

The Teacher Education Program at the University of Arkansas

Teach for Arkansas is the Elementary/Childhood education program from the University of Arkansas campus delivered to the Arkansas Delta through a combination of on-site instruction and distance education. The teacher education program encompasses a baccalaureate and a masters degree based on a Scholar-Practitioner Model that involves extensive field experiences connected to all education courses and an intensive yearlong internship during the students' fifth year. The program partners university faculty with public school educators to enhance the knowledge and skills of the prospective teachers, and the continued professional development of the university and school faculty.

Scholar-Practitioners are defined as teachers who value theory and research, comprehend theory and practice as being complementary and mutually reinforcing, and are committed to the enhancement of teaching, learning, and professional practice. Seven tenets undergird the model. A Scholar-Practitioner is

- One who accesses, uses, and/or generates knowledge.
- One who plans, implements, and models best practice.
- One who understands, respects, and values diversity.

- One who is a developing professional and a lifelong learner.
- One who communicates, cooperates, and collaborates with others.
- One who makes decisions based upon professional standards and ethical criteria.
- One who is knowledgeable about teachers and teaching, learners and learning, schools and schooling.

The Delivery of A Teacher Education Program in the Delta

Students receive all of their instruction at Phillips Community College through a combination of on-site instruction and distance education employing compressed video instruction. Lower division courses are completed as Phillips Community College credits. Upper division and graduate courses are completed as University of Arkansas credits. We emphasize that distance education technology has played a pivotal role in the success of the program. The innovation of compressed video has required the joint efforts of key people on both campuses to coordinate the courses and to provide training and support to the faculty.

Lessons Learned/Challenges Overcome

Teach for Arkansas is a model for land-grant universities who want to build partnerships to help fulfill their mission to meet statewide teacher preparation needs. Throughout its implementation we have learned valuable lessons. By sharing our insights about the delivery of a distance education program, we hope to assist other universities interested in entering such a partnership for teacher education.

A memorandum of understanding signed by each member of the partnership is imperative. We initiated *Teach for Arkansas* with a memorandum between University of Arkansas and Phillips Community College that outlined the responsibilities of each institution as well as common understandings held by each partner about the implementation of the program.

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Among the agreements established in a memorandum of understanding are the requirements for admission into the program, what facilities will be provided by the host institution, the tuition rates, the courses to be provided by the program institution, and what the lines of communication will be between the two institutions.

The program institution cannot assume that advisors at the host institution will have a complete understanding of all program requirements as university regulations. To illustrate, one of the biggest problems we have had in advising *Teach for Arkansas* students has been a misunderstanding about the University of Arkansas' residency requirement and transfer hour rules. Early and ongoing face-to-face advisement of students by the program institution is critical to the success of the program.

Scheduling and staffing of courses can be a challenge. Because program courses do not all reside within one department, communication must occur across departments within an institution as well as between the host and program institutions. To illustrate, *Teach for Arkansas* is a program at the University of Arkansas in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Although, the scheduling of courses is coordinated by the Curriculum and Instruction department, that scheduling cannot be done without the full cooperation of other departments servicing the program, who must identify staff to teach their courses. Usually this means adding an additional course, and in a distance education format, to the servicing department's schedule. When a University of Arkansas course is taught on-site by a visiting faculty, the identification of that faculty member is worked out between Phillips Community College and the Curriculum and Instruction department at the University of Arkansas, however, the credentials of the faculty member must be approved by the department owning the course.

Distance education by the medium of compressed video contributes to the scheduling and staffing challenge. Many students work full time and take courses in the evening. There is constant competition among programs for evening download links. Also, not all faculty have an affinity for this form of course delivery.

Students may not always be familiar with the concept of a cohort. Courses are delivered on a schedule that may or may not be repeated. Students who begin to take cohort courses after the schedule has begun, or students who miss a course or a semester of courses should not assume there will be options for them to finish the program. This contradicts their usual understanding about course availability, i.e., that courses will be repeated on a semester cycle.

Students in a distance education program take all of their courses together at a site away from their program institution. *Teach for Arkansas* students have been limited in their opportunities for wide networking with faculty and students at the University of Arkansas. In fact, some students have never been to the Fayetteville campus. The SBC Foundation has provided a grant for students in their fifth year to attend the Arkansas Reading Association conference in Little Rock. Students from the Fayetteville campus also attend this conference, and we are using this time when students will be in a common location for them to meet and network with each other.

That students have not had easy access to the Fayetteville campus which has provided at least two other challenges. The University of Arkansas and the Phillips Community College campuses vary in the size of their administrative structures and naturally the logistics for navigating each structure are different. At Phillips Community College most administrative offices are housed in one building, where as at the University of Arkansas the offices of Admissions, the Registrar, the Graduate School, and the Department of Curriculum and

Instruction are not door-to-door. Students get frustrated when, for example, they have to track down paperwork sent to the wrong place and telephoning to do so is a long distance call.

Library holdings at the host institution may not be sufficient to support a baccalaureate or masters program. *Teach for Arkansas* students are over 300 miles from their program institution. The education librarian at the University of Arkansas has been extremely helpful in working with our students so that they can use the Internet to locate full text sources for research. In addition, the University of Arkansas has committed dollars from the tuition generated by *Teach for Arkansas* towards acquisitions for the Phillips Community College library.

In the case of the *Teach for Arkansas* program each of these lessons learned has also become a challenge overcome. The program remains a high priority for each stakeholder group, however it is the students who really make the program a success. *Teach for Arkansas* students are dedicated individuals who will provide educational leadership in the Delta schools. The program is a true partnership between two University of Arkansas System campuses that is successfully meeting a critical need in a previously underserved area of the state.